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INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1635
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1209
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RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND 0411
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0820
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000194

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [FJ](#)
SUBJECT: FIJI UPDATE 4/3/07: BAINIMARAMA ON VISA SANCTION;
UN CONFIRMS NEED FOR FIJI PKO; HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

REF: SUVA 191

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D)

Summary

1. (C) Commodore Bainimarama told a dinner gathering of the U.S. cancellation of his visa. He reportedly challenged Ambassador Dinger to retrieve the passport and to "bring his running shoes." Media report that UN SYG Ban responded to a request by Commonwealth SecGen McKinnon for the UN to remove Fiji soldiers from peacekeeping ops by saying "we need them." The Fiji Human Rights Commission has been suspended by an umbrella international human rights organization. Fiji's Police Commissioner says the military is now permitting police investigators to interview soldiers suspected of beating a teenager in January, causing his death. End summary.

Bainimarama and his U.S. visa

2. (C) Fiji media are reporting that Commodore Bainimarama told attendees at a recent dinner at Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) headquarters that he had received a letter from Ambassador Dinger canceling his visa to the U.S. and asking him to make his passport available to the embassy for official visa-cancellation. Bainimarama reportedly challenged the Ambassador to "come and get the passport" and "prepare his running shoes." Comment: Embassy Consul Towry attempted without success to reach Bainimarama by phone to inform him of the cancellation. She followed up with a standard visa-cancellation letter on March 21. The reference to "running shoes" could relate to an RFMF practice of taking pro-democracy advocates "to the barracks" and sometimes having them run laps. There is no requirement that visa holders present their passports for the cancellation; and the Embassy does not intend to accept Bainimarama's challenge. By reaching out to the media, Bainimarama, in effect, served USG interests by publicizing, as we cannot, his personal inclusion in the U.S. visa ban. End comment.

UN SYG on Fiji peacekeepers

3. (U) Fiji media report that Commonwealth Secretary General McKinnon recently asked UN SYG Ban to remove RFMF troops from UN peacekeeping duties, given the RFMF's leadership of the December coup. Reportedly Ban replied, "We need them."

Fiji Human Rights Commission in trouble

4. (U) According to media reports, the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) has suspended the Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC). The primary justification was a statement released by FHRC Director Shaista Shameem in early January that attempted to defend the December coup. The ICC reportedly found the FHRC lacks both credibility and independence. Shameem told the media the FHRC resigned before it was suspended. In arguing the suspension is irrelevant, Shameem dismissed the ICC as "a boy scouts' club" dominated by Western powers.

RFMF to permit Police investigation of murders

15. (U) Fiji Police Commissioner Tikotikoca said on April 2 that the RFMF has permitted Police investigators access to 6 soldiers allegedly implicated in the beating of a Nadi teenager in late January. The teenager died from the head injuries in February. The Commissioner said the Police still await permission to interrogate soldiers implicated in the beating to death of a Tailevu villager in early January.
DINGER